

Cover and Title Page:

31 Days in Proverbs (Helpful thoughts from Doug Nichols)

(All verses from the New American Standard Bible)

-Dedication page:

This short booklet is dedicated to my grandson, David Joseph (DJ) Nichols.

DJ and I have been reading together (even from a distance) the book of Proverbs each morning, coinciding with the date. For example, the first day of the month we read Proverbs 1; the 2nd day of the month, Proverbs 2; and so forth.

The following short devotional paragraphs were written and sent to DJ by email to encourage him in his love for the Word of God and His walk with Him.

-Introduction Page:

Introduction to Proverbs

Proverbs states its theme right at the book's beginning (1:1-7): its goal is to describe and instill "wisdom" in God's people, a wisdom that is founded in the "fear of the Lord" and that works out in the life of the believer in the practical details of everyday situations and relationships.

Key Themes:

Proverbs covers a wide array of topics from daily life: diligence and laziness (6:6-11); friendships (3:27-28; 18:24); speech (10:19-21); marriage (18:22; 19:14); child rearing (22:6); domestic peace (15:17; 17-1); work (11:1); getting along with others and good manners (23:1-2; 25:16-17; 26:17-19; 27:14; eternity (14:32; 23:17-18); and much more. In each of these areas it offers wisdom for realizing the life of the godly; it shows that godliness is of value in every way, as it *holds promise* for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). It demonstrates clearly that:

1. God's will is intensely practical, applying to every aspect of His people's lives. A proper relation to God involves, first, trying hard to understand His truth and then embracing and obeying what one understands.
2. A life lived by God's will is a happy life (3:21-26).
3. A life lived by God's will is a useful life (3:27-28; 12:18, 25).
4. A life lived by God's will does not just happen; one must seek after it, study, pursue it, and discipline oneself.
5. Wisdom invites the naïve to forsake folly and accept wisdom (9:1-6).

Day 1

Always Learning

A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel...The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:5 & 7).

We need to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18) by spending time reading and studying His Word. Godly men and women are readers of the Word of God and good books; books which help us in life and ministry for Christ and to others, for "...only fools despise...instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

Day 2

Wisdom and Safety: Gifts from God

For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones (Proverbs 2:6-8).

The Lord, our God, gives wisdom, knowledge and understanding to His people who are upright (righteous) and who are people of integrity. God promises safety (His presence) to those who are of right behavior and godly character.

Day 3

Trust God in Our Ways

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God is our Father. We can trust Him in all things. We either trust Him or ourselves. If we trust Him, He will lead and care for us in all our ways.

Day 4

How is Your Speech?

Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you (Proverbs 4:24).

Godly character is evidenced by your speech. In Colossians chapter three, we are instructed to put off all bad speech and put on kindness, humility, gentleness

and patience. These are evidenced in godly speech. Let us repent of our bad talk and trust God to use our speech to bless and encourage others to the praise of God.

Day 5

God Watches Us, His Children

For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths (Proverbs 5:21).

It is encouraging to know that our Heavenly Father watches all our ways and all our actions. He loves us, cares for us and guides us for our good and His glory.

Day 6

Six Sins, No Seven

There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. (Proverbs 6:16-19).

It is easy to agree on the first six sins God hates: 1) The sin of haughty eyes (pride); 2) lying; 3) murder; 4) deception; 5) wickedness; 6) falsehood, but we may overlook the seventh which is an abomination to Him; 7) One who spreads strife (sows discord) among God's people. These sins have to do with the character of a worthless person whose eyes, tongue, hands, feet and mouth are used for evil. Our prayer will be, "Oh Lord, please deliver us from these sins."

Day 7

Obey and Live

Keep my commandments and live... (Proverbs 7:2a).

God has given us His Word to live by. We keep His Word, His commandments, because in them (in Him) is life. Jesus said, *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14:15).* We go to the written Word that we might know the "Living Word".

Day 8

Honor God, Hate Evil

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate (Proverbs 8:13).

The one who fears (honors) the Lord in this context is one who is wise; not a fool. The characteristics of one who fears the Lord is one who hates evil, pride, arrogance and perverse speech. A prayer today could be, "Oh Lord, help me to turn from evil; to trust you for humility and to be extremely careful of my speech, that my life and lips will bring glory to you."

Day 9

The Source of Wisdom and Understanding

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 9:10).

To fear God is to acknowledge Him as vastly more powerful than ourselves. It is to put ourselves in a position of obedience. To submit to God our Father is the beginning of wisdom for there is no wisdom apart from God.

Day 10

Industrious or Lazy

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully (Proverbs 10:4-5).

God gives wisdom and ambition to succeed in life for His glory. In our walk with God there is no place for laziness in godliness and growth in Christ. Someone said, "Our idle days are Satan's busy days!" One who is lazy in the great harvest of life is one who acts shamefully. Let us trust God for strength in life to accomplish all He has given us to do for His glory.

Day 11

Pride and Humility

When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom (Proverbs 11:2).

Prideful people do not take advice and do not listen to counsel; therefore they continue to repeat their foolish behavior and this brings shame on them. The humble listen to rebuke and counsel which leads to a change in behavior resulting in wisdom and right living to God's glory.

Day 12

Kindness of God's People

A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal, but even the compassion of the wicked is cruel (Proverbs 12:10).

A truly righteous person is one who is kind, even to animals. Someone asked, "Do dogs and children feel comfortable with you?" The very vivid description in this verse shows that even the actions of a wicked person in his attempt at compassion is cruel. Even his best efforts are dangerous to animals, as well as people.

Day 13

Diligent and Fat

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat (Proverbs 13:4).

This verse shows one of the clearest contrasts in the Bible between a person who is lazy (a sluggard) and one who is industrious (diligent). The lazy groan and complain (from their bed of sleep) but do nothing. The diligent (determined) are rewarded with the fruit (results) of their planning and hard work in every area of life for the sake of Christ. *Whatever you do... do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.... (Colossians 3:17).*

Day 14

Insulting or Honoring God?

He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him (Proverbs 14:31).

Poverty is not always from foolishness, or indulgence, or laziness, but because of the oppression of others (12:23). To oppress the poor is also an attack on God who made them. To be gracious to the poor is to honor God Himself. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus teaches that to visit, feed and clothe the needy is an effort to do so for God Himself.

Day 15

Accepting Reproof

He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires

understanding. The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor comes humility (Proverbs 15: 31-33).

To accept reproof for our actions or attitude helps us become all we should be or could be in Christ. Reproof in these verses is called "life-giving." In accepting reproof we also acquire understanding and wisdom. "Before honor comes humility," which is the result of the reproof allowed by God for our good and His glory!

Day 16

We Plan but God Controls

Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established...The LORD has made everything for its own purpose even the wicked for the day of evil... The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps (Proverbs 16:3, 4 & 9).

We should make plans wisely; always realizing that God is in control and will bring results for His glory and our good. Our Heavenly Father is even in control of the wicked acts of people and uses their evil for good (Christ's death, Acts 2:22-24). We can trust God to lead and guide in all things. He is sovereign. Praise His Name!

Day 17

A Friend at All Times

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity (Proverbs 17:17).

True godly friends encourage us, help us, pray for us, sacrifice for us, even rebuke us, and above all else, love us through tough, difficult times! This sounds like Jesus who loves us, His friends, even though we are such sinners (Luke 7:34). As someone said, 'What would we ever do without our friends?' "

Day 18

Trust in God, Not in Riches

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe. A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination (Proverbs 18:10-11).

The righteous person (one who is a follower of Christ) knows that his/her safety in all of life is in God who is all powerful and loving. The Lord to whom we can run to at all times for protection and care. The rich trust in their riches and their possessions, but these fail because only in God is true security.

Day 19

Banking in Heaven

One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed (Proverbs 19:17).

One of the marks and a main characteristic of a follower of Christ is generosity; being generous to the poor, the needy, the widow, and the orphan. As we are gracious, helpful and giving "to a poor man", we are actually lending to God Himself! We are, in a sense, banking in heaven with God Himself repaying us for any and every act of "graciousness" to the poor. Banks fail, but not the Bank of Glory! The Good Samaritan gave his time and money to help someone in need. After Jesus told this story, He said, "Go and do the same" (Luke 10:37)."

Day 20

Talk is Cheap

Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man? (Proverbs 20:6).

As Christians we need to be careful that our walk is a true testimony of our talk. It is easy to say we are loyal and faithful, but when "push comes to shove" are we true to our word? Nothing brings greater honor to God than the faithful Christ-like living of His people. God has been, and is always faithful to us, therefore we should be faithful in life, and even in death for Him.

Day 21

Go for Two, End with Three

He who pursues righteousness and loyalty finds life, righteousness and honor (Proverbs 21:21)

Proverbs are not guarantees or promises, but they present the best strategy for living to the glory of God. If you pursue (strive after with real determination and hard work) righteous and loyalty, the end result will not be two things but three; life, righteousness, as well as honor. God is no man's debtor, He always pays, "...far more exceedingly beyond all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

Day 22

We Are Blessed as We Bless Others

He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor (Proverbs 22:9)

As God's children care for others, God cares for them. We are blessed in many different ways as we care for others. Many verses in Proverbs encourage generosity (Proverbs 11:24; 28:27; 29:7, 14). God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7), and Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," (Acts 20:35) for in the very "act" of giving you are blessed!

Day 23

Open Your Heart to Hear

Apply your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge (Proverbs 23:12).

We are to apply our heart, to 'open' our heart to discipline and instruction. If we have a hard, sinful and proud heart, we will not learn, as our ears will be closed to words of knowledge. Humility leads to godly knowledge as humble people are willing to listen to instruction, especially to the Word of God!

Day 24

Trust God in Difficult Times

If you are slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited. (Proverbs 24:10)

This is really a call for courage, for trust in God. In fearful, difficult and even painful situations, we do not need to faint in fear as our faith is in God not in ourselves. We are weak and limited in our own strength, but in God we are strong; "...for God is my stronghold." (Psalm 59:17).

Day 25

A Righteous Person, Sweet or Smelly?

Like a trampled spring and a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked (Proverbs 25:26)

The righteous man or woman is to be a light in a dark world, to be salt in an evil society and to stand for truth, compassion and justice. If the righteous yields to injustice and evil, they become as a polluted, smelly pool of water which spreads disease, instead of the sweet refreshing healing of the gospel of Christ!

Day 26

No Wisdom for a Fool

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Proverbs 26:12)

Look at the person of pride and learn a lesson. This person sets himself up in conceit. He thinks of himself as wise, but the Almighty says he is a fool. As followers of Christ, we are to be humble and learners. Our confidence is not to be in our ability and intellect, but in the wisdom of God which comes through clothing ourselves with humility (Colossians 3:12). Proud people are fools, the humble are wise.

Day 27

No Bragging Allowed

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth (Proverbs 27:1).

As children of the Heavenly Father we are to prepare for the future, but not brag or be overconfident about what we may or may not do. Boasting is pride. We are, however, to show humility toward and trust in God. It is wise to work and study hard, to prepare, to provide for the future but in complete faith and trust in the Lord who controls the future.

Day 28

Walking in Integrity

Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is crooked though he be rich (Proverbs 28:6).

It is better to be honest and poor, full of uprightness and integrity, than it is to be crooked and perverse, but rich. A wicked person cannot really enjoy his riches with a bad conscience as a result of wicked, perverse living. There is nothing wrong with earning money and lots of it, if gained from honest work and investment, but not by sin. It is much better to be poor and have a clear conscience before God and others.

Day 29

The Mark of Compassion

The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor, the wicked does not understand such concern (Proverbs 29:7).

One of the main characteristics of a Christian is compassion for the needy, for the poor. Selfishness marks the life of the wicked and they do not understand why a follower of Christ seeks to put others and their needs before his own. As

Christians we are to be concerned “to study the needs” of the poor, not just to give a glance, but to be so filled with compassion that we study and know their need and then seek to do something about it in Christ's name.

Day 30

Safe and Secure in God's Word

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar (Proverbs 30:5-6).

Everything in the Word of God is intended to influence the heart and conduct. It is pure and trustworthy because it is God's Word not man's. It is sufficient, therefore nothing needs to be added to it. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

Day 31

No Wine for Leaders

It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, for they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted (Proverbs 31:4-5).

These verses give wise counsel to Christians and especially Christian leaders, to drink no wine or alcohol. As Christians, our minds are always to be clear, to think carefully, to counsel others and make wise decisions for ourselves and others to the glory of God.